



Exploring Communication Choices: Auditory Oral

Spoken Language through Auditory Oral Philosophy and Practice

Families who have just had a child diagnosed with hearing loss often have many questions about how their child will be able to communicate. There are four main ways, or roads, to communicate with children who have limited or no hearing. One of those roads is Auditory Oral.

Learning to communicate is a journey. At the end of that journey, most families want their child to be a successful communicator and learner.

Your task: Learning about hearing loss and its possible impact on listening and communicating is unexpected for most families. In some ways it's similar to being told you need to make an unexpected trip. Your trip needs to start as soon as possible and it will take time to get there. There are several different roads and all of the roads are available to you and your family on this journey. Some roads may be more difficult or may really slow you down; other roads may be much easier for your child and family. You could start down one road and then switch to another if it helps your child. Your task is to figure out which road you want to take first. There will always be mile markers so you know where you are and people to ask for directions along the way.

Which road? Each road is a different way you can share thoughts, ideas and feelings with your child. Each way will take extra effort by you and your family because a child with hearing loss needs help if they are to learn language well.

What to think about as you plan your route:

1. How much can your child hear? Can he hear at all?
2. How important is it to you that your child learns to speak clearly?
3. How important is it for you and your child to sign or communicate visually?
4. Are you willing to learn a new language or a new way of communicating that you would use whenever you are with your child?

AUDITORY ORAL as a route to communication development

The main goal of auditory oral philosophy and practice is for the child to develop speech and language well enough to be able to learn and live fully within the hearing community. This is accomplished via the following:

- Maximum use of hearing through the use of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants every day for all waking hours.

- Family members do not have to learn signs or cues but they do need to learn strategies to help their child learn to listen, speak and make use of speechreading.
- Use of natural gestures is encouraged. Use of signs in addition to gestures is not encouraged with this communication choice.
- Within auditory-oral philosophy and practice, children may attend special classes specifically for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children beginning at a young age, with a goal of attending regular classes with their typical hearing peers in elementary school.

What to think about as you plan your route: Auditory Oral

1. **HEARING:** Auditory Oral requires full use of a child's hearing. The child is taught to use his hearing to listen to the spoken language of others.
2. **SPEECH:** The child learns to speak as he learns to listen and make full use of his hearing. Speechreading, or watching the lips and face while someone is talking, is also encouraged and often used to teach the child speech and language skills.
3. **VISUAL COMMUNICATION:** Use of natural gestures is an accepted part of Auditory Oral. No sign language, Cued Speech or other visual communication is used.
4. **FAMILY MEMBERS LEARNING A NEW WAY TO COMMUNICATE:** For success, it is necessary that the parents make sure that their child uses working hearing aids and/or cochlear implants every hour that the child is awake. Just wearing amplification is not enough for the child to become a highly successful communicator. Family members are usually very involved with specially-trained teachers or therapists who work with them and their child. Families work hard to use auditory oral training strategies to improve the development of the child's listening, speech and speechreading skills at home. Within Auditory Oral philosophy and practice, young children may also attend special classes specifically for deaf and hard-of-hearing children in addition to their home activities.

Auditory Oral:

- Requires consistent, diligent use of amplification.
- Does not require learning a different language or manual communication method.
- Learning is through listening, speechreading and natural gestures.
- Requires the home to become a listening and learning environment with daily practice of strategies integrated into family routines and activities.
- Takes patience and consistent use of listening and language learning strategies in the home and other daily environments.

- May include the child attending special classes for deaf and hard-of-hearing children beginning at a young age.

Other Questions to Ask in Your Community

1. Do other families of children with hearing loss use Auditory Oral where you live? Is there someone that works with your local school district Help Me Grow program that can help your family to learn Auditory Oral strategies? Are there children currently in your school district who are learning through the use of Auditory Oral in their classrooms?
2. Where can you go to learn Auditory Oral strategies?
3. What do other parents of children with hearing loss and professionals who specialize in helping children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing say about these local services?

Your early intervention professional, your child's audiologist, or the deaf and hard of hearing teachers in your school district should be able to give you names of parents who have already gotten answers to these questions.

Remember

- **Each family is different.**
There isn't a "right" choice for all children or all families. Each child needs different things. Parents are also different, and have their own hopes for their child. Some families choose one main way of communicating while other families make other choices.
- **Be flexible.**
Follow your child's lead. You may feel stressed out over choosing one of the communication choices. Some parents even combine ways of communicating. It's important to be flexible. Give one method your best effort. If it doesn't work, be open to trying other ways to communicate.

Related Information

To view an example of Auditory Oral go to

http://www.ncbegin.org/communication_options/oral_aural.shtml

Source – Beginnings for Parents

- Oral Deaf Education
<http://www.oraldeafed.org/>
- Beginnings for Parents: Oral/Auditory Oral

http://www.ncbegin.org/communication_options/oral_aural.shtml

- Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf
<http://agbell.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=784>
<http://www.familysupportconnection.org/html/HOHissues.htm>
- Raising Deaf Kids: Auditory Oral: Learning to Read Lips and Speak
<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/ao.php>
- Family Support Connection: Should I learn sign language, cued English, or any other communication system?
 - <http://www.familysupportconnection.org/html/HOHissues.htm>